

the allegations concerning Babbitt's invocation of Ickes at Babbitt's July 14, 1995, meeting with Paul Eckstein.

The article quoted portions of Eckstein's affidavit, filed in the federal court in Wisconsin, which concerned the statements that Babbitt was directed to decide the matter by Ickes. The article also stated that Ickes denied that he had "attempt[ed] to pressure the department to kill the project," although it noted that Ickes staffer Jennifer O'Connor had made status inquiries to Interior about the application. John Duffy reportedly denied allegations of a call between Ickes and the Secretary and allegations of improper political influence generally.⁶⁰⁰

Interior Department Director of Congressional Relations Melanie Beller recalled a conversation she had with Babbitt during a car ride to Capitol Hill right after the Wall Street Journal article appeared. Beller said she commented to Babbitt that the allegations were "ridiculous."⁶⁰¹ Babbitt replied, in an off-handed manner, something to the effect of, "it shows you not to say things in front of people."⁶⁰²

⁵⁹⁹(...continued)
and an official at Interior. The article noted that, between May 1995 and July 1996, approximately \$70,000 in contributions had been made by three of the tribes opposed to the casino application.

⁶⁰⁰The basis for Duffy's purported denial is uncertain. Duffy, Collier, Shields and Sibbison denied speaking with Babbitt about his conversation with Eckstein. Leshy said he simply asked whether Babbitt spoke to Ickes, and did so after July 19, 1996, in connection with the preparation of Babbitt's response to a letter from Sen. McCain. *See* Section II.K.1.d., *infra*. Babbitt denies speaking about the details of his conversation with anyone.

⁶⁰¹OIC Interview of Melanie Beller, Nov. 20, 1998, at 2 (hereinafter "OIC Beller Int.").

⁶⁰²*Id.*